A Study on the Waiting Time for the First Employment of Arts Graduates in Sri Lanka

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Abstract : Transition from tertiary level education to employment is one of the challenges that many fresh university graduates face after graduation. The transition period or the waiting time to obtain the first employment varies with the socio-economic factors and the general characteristics of a graduate. Compared to other fields of study, Arts graduates in Sri Lanka, have to wait a long time to find their first employment. The objective of this study is to identify the determinants of the transition from higher education to employment of these graduates using survival models. The study is based on a survey that was conducted in the year 2016 on a stratified random sample of Arts graduates from Sri Lankan universities who had graduated in 2012. Among the 469 responses, 36 (8%) waiting times were interval censored and 13 (3%) were right censored. Waiting time for the first employment varied between zero to 51 months. Initially, the log-rank and the Gehan-Wilcoxon tests were performed to identify the significant factors. Gender, ethnicity, GCE Advanced level English grade, civil status, university, class received, degree type, sector of first employment, type of first employment and the educational qualifications required for the first employment were significant at 10%. The Cox proportional hazards model was fitted to model the waiting time for first employment with these significant factors. All factors, except ethnicity and type of employment were significant at 5%. However, since the proportional hazard assumption was violated, the lognormal Accelerated failure time (AFT) model was fitted to model the waiting time for the first employment. The same factors were significant in the AFT model as in Cox proportional model.

Keywords : AFT model, first employment, proportional hazard, survey design, waiting time
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